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COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

RECORD OF THE THIRD MEETING

Held at the Austria Center Vienna
on Wednesday, 23 September 1998, at 3.10 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. JOSEPH (Australia)

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[*] GC(42)/20.

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The composition of delegations attending the session is given in document GC(42)/INF/13/Rev.3.

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Abbreviations used in this record

INDAG	International Nuclear Desalination Advisory Group
MW	megawatt
SMR	Small and medium-sized reactors

MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN NUCLEAR, RADIATION AND WASTE SAFETY (resumed)

1. The CHAIRMAN invited the representative of Argentina to introduce the modified version of the draft resolution in document GC(42)/COM.5/8 which had been circulated.

2. Mr. BENINSON (Argentina) said the draft resolution had been modified in order to avoid duplication with the draft resolution in document GC(42)/COM.5/6 ("Measures against illicit trafficking in nuclear materials and other radioactive sources"); the deletions suggested by the representative of Canada during the previous meeting had been made. Also, operative paragraph 1 had been converted into a preambular paragraph - with consequential renumbering of the other operative paragraphs. In addition, as suggested by the representative of Australia, "to explore" in old operative paragraph 4 (new operative paragraph 3) had been replaced by "to prepare for the consideration of the Board of Governors a report on".

3. The CHAIRMAN suggested that "response to" in new operative paragraph 4 be replaced by "implementation of".

4. Mr. SHOAIB (Pakistan) suggested that "at its next" in the same paragraph be amended to read "at the next".

5. Mr. PAPADIMITROPOULOS (Greece) suggested deletion of the words "International Conference on" from the title of the draft resolution.

6. The Committee accepted the suggested changes.

7. Mr. DELACROIX (France) said it was his understanding that the report requested of the Secretariat would focus on the safety of radiation sources rather than the security of radioactive materials.

8. Mr. SABURIDO (Cuba), Mr. MCINTOSH (Australia), Ms. OK (Turkey), Mr. MULTONE (Switzerland) and Mr. CASTERTON (Canada) expressed support for the modified version of the draft resolution with the accepted changes.

9. The CHAIRMAN took it that the Committee wished to recommend to the General Conference that it adopt the modified version of the draft resolution contained in document GC(42)/COM.5/8 with the changes accepted during the discussion.

10. It was so agreed.

11. The CHAIRMAN also took it that the Committee wished to recommend to the General Conference that it take note of the information contained in documents GC(42)/INF/5 and GC(42)/INF/6 and Add.1.

12. It was so agreed.

PLAN FOR PRODUCING POTABLE WATER ECONOMICALLY
(GOV/1998/4-GC(42)/1, Rev.1 and Rev.1/Corr.1; GC(42)/COM.5/4)

13. Mr. CRONJE (South Africa), introducing the draft resolution in document GC(42)/COM.5/4 on behalf of the Group of 77, said that resolution GC(41)/RES/14 adopted at the previous session had served as a model. However, preambular paragraphs (g), (h), (i) and (j) and operative paragraphs 3, 4 and 8 were new.

14. Mr. DELACROIX (France) said that the nuclear desalination of sea water was an interesting option but raised a number of safety issues. In that connection, he proposed that operative paragraph 4 be amended to read "Urges the Director General to continue the Agency's work regarding the safety aspect of desalination using nuclear energy" and be moved up to become operative paragraph 3.

15. Mr. LIU Yongde (China) expressed appreciation of the Agency's activities relating to the desalination of sea water using nuclear energy.

16. As stated in paragraph 4 of document GC(42)/1/Rev.1, "[i]n China a feasibility study has been initiated for a heating reactor combined with a desalination unit that could produce 150 000 m^3/d of potable water" and a "feasibility study for a nuclear desalination plant in Morocco based on a 10 MW heating reactor from China will be completed this October. The site has been identified and economic assessments have been completed." Substantial human and financial resources had been invested in that Sino-Moroccan co-operation project.

17. Small and medium-sized reactors (SMRs) could be particularly useful for supplying power in countries and regions with low-capacity electricity grids and for non-power applications of nuclear energy such as seawater desalination and district heating. China would like to see joint efforts on the part of the Secretariat and Member States to increase the international financial and technical support for such uses of SMRs.

18. Mr. TITKOV (Russian Federation), having expressed support for the Agency's activities relating to the use of nuclear energy in seawater desalination, said that the Russian Federation had for some years been advocating the use, for seawater desalination, of floating power units based on ship reactors of tried and tested design. A decision had recently been taken to build such a floating power unit near the Russian town of Pevek, to supply heat and electricity to northern Siberia, and a similar facility was planned for the eastern part of the Russian Federation.

19. Thus, the Russian Federation was moving from the design to the construction of floating power units and was prepared to build such facilities for interested foreign partners under "build-own-operate" arrangements whereby the Russian contractor would meet all construction and operating costs; the foreign partner would merely have to identify an appropriate site and undertake to purchase the energy produced during the period of the contract.

20. Design refinements would be necessary before the conclusion of contracts. Such refinements could be made on the basis of bilateral discussions with the potential foreign partners, but the Russian Federation was very keen that the Agency participate. That would benefit not only the parties directly concerned, but also the Agency, since it would be involved in a promising new form of international co-operation.

21. Mr. TOWLER (United Kingdom) suggested that the word "regularly" be deleted from operative paragraph 7 of the draft resolution in document GC(42)/COM.5/4.

22. Mr. RAGHURAMAN (India) said that his country had long been participating in Agency activities relating to nuclear desalination, including activities connected with the launching of a nuclear desalination demonstration project, the co-ordinated research project on "Optimization of the Coupling of Nuclear Reactors and Desalination Systems" and the preparation of the Guidebook on Introduction of Nuclear Desalination.

23. India had been engaged for many years in research and development work on the desalination of sea water and brackish water and had developed successful multi-stage flash evaporation and reverse osmosis technologies. Pilot plants using both technologies were in operation and valuable experience had been gained. It was now proposed to set up a 6300 m^3/d hybrid multi-stage flash/reverse osmosis demonstration plant at Madras Atomic Power Station. Experience in operating that plant would be shared with interested Member States.

24. India, which agreed with INDAG that there was a "need for international co-operation in the planning and implementation of nuclear desalination demonstration programmes" and that the Agency "should provide an international forum for coordination and sharing of resources", would continue to participate in the Agency's nuclear desalination-related activities.

25. As stated in paragraph 12 of document GC(42)/1/Rev.1, SMRs were "a suitable option for electricity generation in countries with small electricity grids or for remotely located areas." Unfortunately, the resources allocated within the Agency for SMR-related activities were very modest - a situation that should be rectified. At all events, India was grateful to the five Member States which had been providing extrabudgetary financial support for those activities.

26. Mr. BOURITA (Morocco) said that the problem of water scarcity had escalated to such an extent that it might well soon pose a threat to international peace and security. The problem was particularly serious in regions such as the Middle East and North Africa, where political tensions already existed; the approximately 6% of the world's population living in those regions had access to less than 1% of the world's water resources. The Agency had a very important role to play in dealing with that problem.

27. Referring to the feasibility study "for a nuclear desalination plant in Morocco based on a 10 MW heating reactor from China" mentioned in paragraph 4 of document GC(42)/1/Rev.1, he said that his country was very satisfied with progress to date.

28. Having expressed support for the amendment to the draft resolution in document GC(42)/COM.5/4 proposed by the representative of France, he proposed the inclusion of the phrase "particularly through the desalination of sea water" at the end of preambular paragraph (f).

29. Ms. OK (Turkey) expressed support for the draft resolution with the addition proposed by the representative of Morocco.

30. Mr. MCINTOSH (Australia) suggested that, given the need to streamline the work of the General Conference, the agenda item "Plan for producing potable water economically" be considered only every second year in future.

31. Mr. CASTERTON (Canada), having expressed support for Agency activities relating to nuclear desalination and SMRs, said that his delegation could go along with the draft resolution as it stood. At the same time, his delegation was attracted by the suggestion just made by the representative of Australia.

32. Mr. PAPADIMITROPOULOS (Greece) proposed amending the phrase "the safety aspect" in operative paragraph 4 of the draft resolution to read "the safety and security aspects".

33. Mr. RAGHURAMAN (India), referring to the observations made by the representatives of Australia and Canada about the possible "biennialization" of the agenda item under consideration, urged that the idea not be examined until the General Conference's next session.

34. Mr. BOURITA (Morocco) endorsed what had just been said by the representative of India.

35. The CHAIRMAN said he took it that the Committee wished to recommend to the General Conference that it adopt the draft resolution contained in document GC(42)/COM.5/4 with the phrase "particularly through the desalination of sea water" added at the end of preambular paragraph (f), with operative paragraph 4 amended to read "Urges the Director General to continue the Agency's work regarding the safety and security aspects of desalination using nuclear energy" and moved into the operative paragraph 3 position (with renumbering of the subsequent paragraphs) and with "regularly" deleted from operative paragraph 7.

36. It was so agreed.

37. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee discuss at the General Conference's next session whether the agenda item "Plan for producing potable water economically" should thenceforth be considered on a biennial basis.

38. It was so agreed.

STRENGTHENING THE EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPROVING THE EFFICIENCY OF THE SAFEGUARDS SYSTEM AND APPLICATION OF THE MODEL PROTOCOL (GC(42)/12; GC(42)/COM.5/11)

39. Mr. KEMPEL (Austria), introducing the draft resolution contained in document GC(42)/COM.5/11, said that in preambular paragraph (f) "23 September 1998" should read "24 September 1998".

40. The CHAIRMAN suggested that "Model Protocol" be amended to "Model Additional Protocol" wherever it occurred in the text of the draft resolution.

41. Mr. KEMPEL (Austria) said he believed that the Chairman's suggestion would be acceptable to all the co-authors.

42. Mr. RAGHURAMAN (India) requested that further consideration of the draft resolution be deferred until delegations had had more time in which to compare it with the corresponding resolution adopted by the General Conference at its forty-first session (GC(41)/RES/16). A cursory comparison had revealed that the words "without delay as far as available resources permit" in operative paragraph 1 of resolution GC(41)/RES/16 did not appear in operative paragraph 1 of the draft resolution under consideration. His delegation would like to see at least "as far as available resources permit" included in the draft resolution.

43. The CHAIRMAN said that the request made by the representative of India was a reasonable one and suggested that the Committee revert to the agenda item under consideration at its next meeting.

44. It was so decided.

MEASURES AGAINST ILLICIT TRAFFICKING IN NUCLEAR MATERIALS AND OTHER RADIOACTIVE SOURCES (GC(42)/17; GC(42)/COM.5/6)

45. Mr. KEMPEL (Austria), having introduced the draft resolution contained in document GC(42)/COM.5/6, suggested - in response to a request for a clarification from Mr. TITKOV (Russian Federation) - that operative paragraph 4 be amended to read "Invites the Director General to submit a report to the Board of Governors on possibilities of enhancing co-operation in this field".

46. Ms. OK (Turkey) said that, in view of the relationship between illicit trafficking in nuclear materials and acts of nuclear terrorism, reference should be made in the draft resolution to the fact that the United Nations General Assembly had undertaken the elaboration of an international convention on the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism.

The meeting was suspended at 4.50 p.m. and resumed at 5.15 p.m.

47. Mr. KEMPEL (Austria) said that, in informal consultations on the point raised by the delegate of Turkey, agreement had been reached on the addition of a preambular paragraph and an operative paragraph to the draft resolution, as follows:

- "(f) Noting that the UN General Assembly has undertaken the elaboration of an international convention on the suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism (UNGA resolution 51/210 of 17 December 1996)";

- "7. Requests the Director General to bring the present resolution to the attention of the UN General Assembly and invites the UN General Assembly, in elaborating the above-mentioned convention, to bear in mind the Agency's activities in preventing and combating illicit trafficking in nuclear materials and other radioactive sources".

48. Ms. OK (Turkey) said that, although Turkey was not satisfied with the Agency activities directed against illicit trafficking, her delegation could accept the draft resolution as amended.

49. The CHAIRMAN said he took it that the Committee wished to recommend to the General Conference that it adopt the draft resolution contained in document GC(42)/COM.5/6 with the suggested amendment to operative paragraph 4 and the inclusion of the additional preambular paragraph and additional operative paragraph just read out by the representative of Austria.

50. It was so agreed.

51. Mr. JOHNSON (Director, Legal Division), welcoming the two additional paragraphs, said it was important that "the Agency's activities in preventing and combating illicit trafficking" be borne in mind by the General Assembly.

ARTICLE VI OF THE STATUTE
(GC(42)/19 and Add.1)

52. Mr. IKEDA (Japan), speaking as Chairman of the Board of Governors and introducing the Board report contained in document GC(42)/19, said that during the past year he had conducted intensive consultations on the Article VI issue and that, as a result, the matters to be addressed by the General Conference had been narrowed down to (i) the extent of a Board expansion, (ii) the composition of regional groups and (iii) the criteria for designation. He hoped that the Committee would focus on those matters.

53. Mr. BENMOUSSA (Morocco), recalling that in resolution GC(41)/RES/20 the General Conference had in 1997 called for the submission by the Board of a "finalized formula" for approval by it at its 1998 session, said that during the past year the Board had been blessed with a Chairman - Ambassador Ikeda of Japan - who had displayed unparalleled patience in his untiring efforts to arrive at a "finalized formula".

54. Of the three matters referred to by Ambassador Ikeda, that of the criteria for designation was far from insoluble; however, it should perhaps be placed in "cold storage" for a while. Also, he could envisage a solution being found to the matter of the extent of a Board expansion; for example, the African Group, which had a legitimate claim to an additional seat, might settle for two-thirds of a seat. The really intractable matter was that of the composition of regional groups, where the stumbling-block was the idea that Israel and a number of Arab States should be members of the same regional group.

55. In his delegation's view, the key to progress lay in tackling the three matters separately. Moreover, progress would be facilitated if everyone bore in mind (i) the distinction between, on one hand, the geographical areas referred to in the Statute and, on the other, the political groupings which had come into being within the Agency, and (ii) the fact that, although the Secretariat compiled - for its internal use - informal lists with all Member States assigned to one geographical area or another, there was no need for Member States to have official versions of those lists.

56. He believed that the formal proposal for amending Article VI which had been made by Japan (and which was reproduced in Annex 1 to document GC(42)/19) could - once suitably modified - provide a solution.

57. Perhaps Mr. Stratford (United States of America), Chairman of the Committee of the Whole at the General Conference's previous session, could join forces with Ambassador Ikeda in guiding the Committee's efforts to arrive at a consensus on an issue which had plagued the Agency for far too long.

58. Mr. KEMPEL (Austria), speaking on behalf of the European Union and associated States, said that a solution would not be found simply by suitably modifying the formal proposal made by Japan. Quite apart from the question of what constituted a suitable modification, the European Union considered that the matter of the extent of a Board expansion could not be divorced from that of the composition of regional groups and that of the criteria for designation.

59. The European Union's position was that true progress could be achieved only if all three matters referred to by Ambassador Ikeda were resolved at the same time.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.